



LOW

Back Pain

Exercises to promote your recovery

Diagnosing and treating low back pain

To determine the cause of your back pain, your doctor will conduct a physical examination of the affected area and ask about your symptoms. Depending on the nature of your pain, you may undergo X-rays or other diagnostic tests, such as a CT scan (computed tomography), an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) or an EMG (electromyogram).

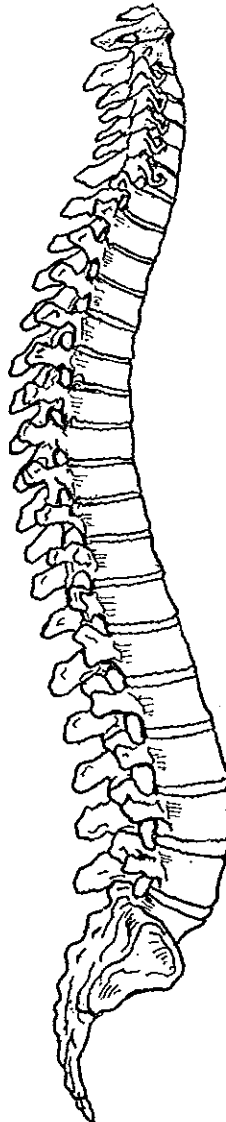
After your evaluation, your physician may choose to treat you with one of several modalities such as bed rest, physical therapy, home exercises or medication to alleviate pain, reduce swelling and/or relieve muscle spasm.

If so, you are not alone. Low back pain is common and can be very frustrating. Persistent discomfort in your lower back can make it difficult to stand, walk or even sit. The pain may also extend from the hip down to the leg and foot.

Back basics

Because low back problems are often aggravated by improper body mechanics and activities that require heavy lifting or prolonged periods of bending, changing the way you perform some daily activities may reduce your risk of re-injury. To keep your back healthy:

- Don't strain to reach things. Keep items you use every day on shelves no higher than your shoulder.
- Avoid bending or stooping with your back rounded and your legs straight. To lift something, squat down as low as you can while using your knees and keeping your back straight. Hold the item close to your body and lift with your legs.
- Stand (or sit) tall. Don't slouch. If you sit for long periods of time throughout the day, take breaks to stand or walk around. Change positions often. Sit in chairs with firm backs and use a lumbar pillow for support.

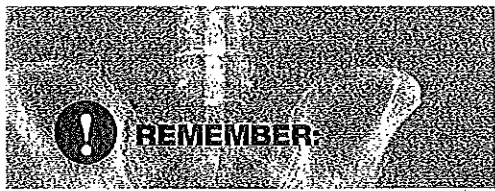


It takes 33 small bones, called vertebrae, stacked in a column to form the spine. Even minor injury to one vertebra can result in debilitating pain.



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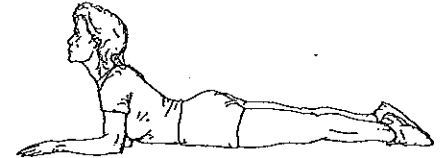
Some exercises may increase soreness and cause mild swelling that should go away in a day or two. If swelling and soreness last longer than that, or if the symptoms are severe, discontinue your exercise program and call your doctor.

Strengthening the low back

You can enhance your recovery from lower back injury or surgery by performing some simple exercises at home. These exercises are designed to help improve the strength and flexibility of your back and are an important part of your rehabilitation program. Perform only the exercises specified by your doctor. Exercises that are not recommended can cause further damage. Do each exercise slowly, rhythmically and carefully. For best results, perform your exercise program 1 to 3 times daily.



KNEE RAISE: This stretch should be performed before and after your strengthening exercise routine. While doing a pelvic tilt (see exercise below), raise one knee to your chest. Hug your knee gently, then lower your foot to the floor. Perform this exercise with the opposite knee, then repeat raising both knees at the same time. Be sure to keep your knees bent at all times while performing this exercise. Repeat 5 times.



PARTIAL PRESS-UP: Lie face down with your arms next to your body and your head turned to one side. Bring your hands to rest with your palms next to your head. Keeping your elbows on the floor, slowly raise your upper body enough to lean on your elbows. Let your lower back and your legs relax as much as you can. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



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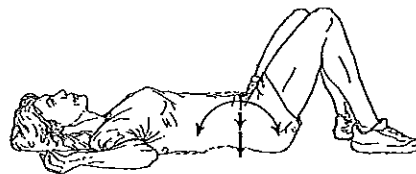
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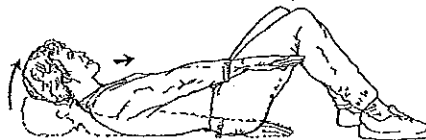
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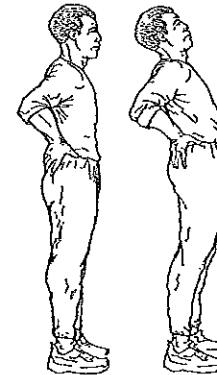
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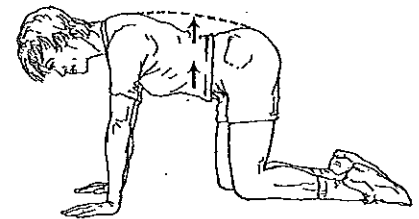
PELVIC TILT: Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. While tightening your abdominal and buttocks muscles, tilt your pelvis so that the curve of the small of the back is flat on the floor. Hold for 10 seconds, then relax. Repeat 5 times.



PARTIAL SIT-UPS: Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Keep your arms at your side for balance. Tighten your abdominal muscles, lift your head so that your chin touches your chest, then raise your shoulders off the floor slightly as you reach for your toes. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax. Repeat 10 times.



BACKWARD BEND: Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent. Place your hands in the small of your back as shown; bend gently and slowly backward at the waist as far as possible. Return to the upright position. Repeat 5 times.



CAT STRETCH: Kneel on the floor on your hands and knees as shown in the figure. Relax your abdomen and let your back sag. Then tighten your stomach muscles and arch your back. Hold for several seconds. Repeat 5 times.